**Forward Looking Gender Assessment for the Nile Basin Development Challenge**

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**Summary of Study Findings**

The study assesses how gender issues have been taken account of in NBDC work and to provide recommendations on how gender can be incorporated into programmes following the closure of the NBDC at the end of 2013. The author conducted skype interviews with key project staff focusing on how they address gender in their work, and on the challenges and opportunities they – and the wider project – engage with when working on gender both ‘in the field’, in partner organizations, and within the NBDC team itself. Each respondent was asked to check their typed-up interview. These interviews are provided in Annex 1 and critically underpin the recommendations made in this report. To complement these interviews, the author read NBDC documentation and attended a NBDC stakeholder meeting (February 20th, 21st) in order to talk to more NBDC staff and stakeholders and to better understand the programme. During this meeting a ‘gender lunch’ was held bringing together 10 NBDC staff and wider colleagues, during which a number of recommendations were made. The recommendations in this report build on these, on recommendations made by skype respondents, and on the author’s own experience.

The study finds that gender outputs and outcomes are weak across the research portfolio of the CPWF NBDC. There are many reasons for this. Chief among them is the fact that gender was not properly addressed in the design stage of the NBDC and therefore ‘got lost’. This need not have been a critical failing, but historically the NBDC leadership failed to address this deficit. This is unfortunate because much could have been done to encourage the formulation and integration of gender-responsive research for development across the research portfolio over the past ten years of CPWF R4D in the Nile Basin, together with the associated measures needed to make this happen, such as staff training.

This said, scattered research initiatives have been developed. In each case, these have been dependent on the determination of the associated staff member to push for, and implement, gender-responsive work. These initiatives, such as digital stories and participatory video, form the bedrock of gender lessons learned from the NBDC. Games, such as Happy Strategies and Wat-a-Game, have been conducted in gender-disaggregated groups. However, the lessons learned have not been effectively taken up by the wider programme. Some sex-disaggregated data has been collected but not fully analysed or acted upon.

The study finds a fairly high level of interest among NBDC staff across all components to address gender in their work. It is recognised as important – the will is there. The key issue is ‘how’ gender can be addressed in their work. In some cases, the ability to ask the ‘right’ questions is lacking. It is not clear to modellers, for example, how gender can be addressed at basin level and higher scales. There has been, historically, a lack of coordinated co-learning and methodological discussion between programme components. This has compounded the NBDC’s difficulties in mainstreaming gender which would ideally have been achieved through facilitating theoretical and experiential exchange between social scientists and biophysicists across the programme.

There are no high profile women Ethiopian scientists (post-grads, PhDs) in the NBDC. This is important because the lack of women national NBDC staff shapes the kind of interface the NBDC has with national partners and contributes towards its difficulties in hearing the voice, and gendered needs, of women in partner organisations and communities. It is noted that women form the minority of students in the natural sciences, and it is also true that it can be hard to attract high level national women staff. At the same time, the NBDC - as part of the whole CG system – has not been pro-active in recruiting and supporting/ mentoring female national staff and students, whether natural or social scientists. There is no incentive system in place to reward scientists who actively seek out and mentor (if necessary) women national staff and students.

The NBDC is in its closing months and so in a period of consolidation and reflection upon the lessons learned from its work. The current leadership is strongly supportive of work on gender. This means it is possible to create a number of short and longer term opportunities to capture the lessons learned from the NBDC’s modest work on gender to date, and to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed in follow on programmes.

**Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: ILRI/IWMI Leadership Statement in Support of Work on Gender**

Top leadership support is essential to creating a conducive environment for work on gender and ‘leading by doing’. Hence, leadership should issue a strong joint statement on the importance of work on gender in the NBDC and follow on programmes and projects. The statement, shared with IWMI and ILRI partners, should include:

* Recognition of the importance of addressing gender issues across the research portfolio.
* Recognition of the importance of creating a gender-aware working environment within the NBDC and follow on programmes and projects.
* Steps to be followed over the lifespan of the NBDC and into follow on programmes in order to mainstream gender in all components. Suggestions are made below.

In order to help legitimize this work within the country programme, it may be strategic to note that the Government of Ethiopia provides a strongly supportive environment for work on gender and women’s empowerment within its own institutions. It will be valuable to draw upon the experience of international and national development partners which have actively worked to mainstream gender in their programmes.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure Gender is Integrated into Design Phase of Follow on Programmes**

A high level gender expert, preferably Ethiopian, should be recruited to work with programme and project managers, and scientists, to ensure that gender is effectively addressed in the follow on programme to the NBDC. This person should participate in the work of teams in the development of impact pathways to ensure that these integrate gender throughout, working backwards from intended impact through outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs. Assisting teams to develop effective gendered research questions, appropriate research methodologies, gender-sensitive logistics and providing initial advice on the best gender-responsive partners to help translate gender-response research outcomes into effective gender impacts will be an important part of their work. The latter task may involve conducting a scoping activity, including visits, to help select promising international (eg CARE, Irish Aid, SIDA, SNV etc), national, regional and local development partners.

The expert should be tasked with identifying and supporting internal team capacity development needs. This is likely to involve organising, and in many cases facilitating, Gender Learning Events (see below for provisional suggestions) for staff and partners.

If it is possible to recruit someone in the closing months of the NBDC this would help to ensure the lessons already learned are captured and concentrated for replication.

Suggested duration of contract: Min 6 months; ideally full-time to ensure that a key staff member is responsible for tracking progress throughout the life of the project.

**Recommendation 3: Cross-Basin /Cross CRP Workshop on Gender-Responsive /Transformative Methodologies and Recommendations**

The NBDC has a limited palette of lessons learned with respect to promoting gender-responsive /gender transformative methodologies to take forward into follow on programmes. The aim of a cross basin/cross CRP Workshop would be to produce innovative, replicable recommendations for future work for this basin and others based on solid ‘Best Practice’. Participants would need to come with appropriate documentation to promote effective sharing and uptake. It is expected that other CPWF Basins and CRPs (e.g. Humid Tropics and WLE) will have valuable lessons to share and that the CRPs will be eager to learn as they launch their programmes. The NBDC would participate by highlighting its core gender innovations (see Recommendation 4).

If the follow on programme to the NBDC is cross-basin then such a Cross-Basin/Cross CRP workshop would be particularly valuable.

Suggested Duration of Workshop: 2 or 3 days. Outputs: Learning Brief, Collated Evidence and Methodologies, Recommendations from Workshop.

Funding: CGIAR.

**Recommendation 4: Capture Gender Lessons Learned during the NBDC**

The NBDC is currently analysing and consolidating lessons learned in the form of key messages, publications, learning events and other outputs. It is important to ensure that the NBDC’s work on gender is highlighted in this process.

**Gender WriteShop (suggested approx. Sept-Oct. 2013)**

The aim of the Gender WriteShop is to bring together NBDC practitioners with insights into research and gender to pull out key lessons learned during the programme with regard to (i) benefits to the programme of gender-responsive work, and (ii) opportunities lost and the costs these have imposed upon the potential of the programme to be both truly participatory and also responsive to rural communities and farmer needs. These lessons would contribute to the NBDC November 2013 stakeholder workshop.

Outputs: Learning Briefs, journal papers (and contribution to wider CGIAR current implementation of its gender strategy)

Duration: 2 days minimum.

**Associated Work on Gender until End 2013**

* Journal papers on gender-responsive work in the NBDC.
* Ensure research publications by NBDC scientists build gender into their analytic frameworks.
* Analysis and interpretation of sex-disaggregated data collated to date, primarily to provide baselines for follow on programmes.
* Gender Stories: Interviews with women working at different levels in partner institutions, Innovation Platforms, etc. using digital stories methodology and other formats.
* Participatory videos.

**Recommendation 5: Recruit and Support Women National Scientific Staff and Students in Follow on Programmes**

Ethiopian women social and natural scientists, both students and senior staff, are important for three reasons. First, their presence will assist follow on programmes to the NBDC to integrate gender perspectives in their work. Second, their presence will enable work led by IWMI/ILRI to ‘lead by example’ given that the presence of senior Ethiopian women staff in partner organisations is generally low. Third, their presence will contribute to the achievement of an enabling interface with national partners at all levels, particularly with respect to encouraging women to speak and to participate actively.

For this to work, IWMI/ILRI should initiate several steps. They are likely to include:

* Quota for national women students and scientific staff of various disciplines and at different levels.
* Mentoring programme to enable national women staff and students to reach their full potential.
* Pro-active recruitment campaigns in universities and elsewhere.

To underpin such work, IWMI/ILRI will need to provide incentives for their staff to locate and mentor national women staff and students.

**Recommendation 6: Training on Gender for NBDC and Follow on Programmes**

A widely shared understanding between team members on the meaning of ‘gender’ and on how gender-responsive (gender-sensitive, gender-transformative) work improves research for development is needed. It is important to locate this in wider work on understanding concepts of participation, co-learning and empowerment. A palette of complementary learning events is outlined below.

**Learning Event on Gender 1: Concepts and Practice**

Target: NBDC Project Leaders/ Gender WriteShop Group

This learning event should focus firstly on arriving at a common, agreed understanding of ‘gender’ through conducting a ‘gender conversation’ between team members. Second, ways in which to promote inter-disciplinary work on gender should be discussed with concrete pathways developed for effective collaboration between social and biophysical scientists. It may be best to design this workshop for ILRI/IWMI project leaders and the Gender Writeshop Group (Rec 4) since the leadership is critical to guiding and supporting gender mainstreaming (Rec 1).

**Learning Event on Gender 2: Partnering for Gender-Responsive Research Design**

Target: NBDC Staff/Staff of Follow on Programme and National Partners

This learning event should focus on teasing out the implications of gendered, participatory perspectives at different scales of research. What are the implications for research design? Examples of best practice?

This could be integrated into the NBDC Participatory Methodologies workshop planned for May 2013.

**Learning Event on Gender 3: Gender in Modelling**

Target: Modellers and Social Scientists on NBDC and Follow on Programme

This learning event should focus on demonstrating how adding gender as a variable to modelling activities at various scales can be done, and why it adds value (e.g. through running scenarios to help make gender trade-offs explicit (likely impact on male/female workloads in relation to adoption of particular practices *etc*.); ensure basin level recommendations are locally informed.

This event could be integrated into the CPWF cross basin workshop suggested above (Rec 3). Otherwise it could be planned for 2014 with IWMI, CIAT and SEI modellers.

**Learning Event on Gender 4: Gendered Research Methodologies**

Target: All NBDC Staff/Staff of Follow on Programme

This learning event should focus on assisting researchers to work in gender-responsive ways with regard to logistics (who, what, when, where, how) as well as in the selection of methodologies. Some methodologies are particularly appropriate to gender-responsive work. Others have to be systematically engendered.

**Recommendation 7: Supporting Behavioural Change - Train and Support Gender Aware Male Change Agents in NBDC/Follow on Programmes**

Male NBDC/Follow on programme staff can play an important role in ensuring that institutional arrangements and organisational cultures become more gender-aware. They can help to ensure that interactions with partner institutions and communities are more gender-sensitive and to provide specific support to men willing to change.

The MenEngage network, among others, fosters men as change agents. It would be very helpful to support learning visits from male NBDC staff to MenEngage Partners in SSA to help them develop and implement plans for change.

**Recommendation 8: Supporting Behavioural Change in Partner Communities**

A key recommendation is to support behavioural change with respect to gender relations in target communities at the same time as promoting Innovation Platforms and other innovations. Unless women and men are able to maximise their capacities they will be unable to take the steps necessary to properly engage with innovative practice.

Ways Forward: Work with national gender experts to produce a tailor-made household methodology for the NBDC/Follow on Programmes. Since it will take time to develop and implement the methodology it is suggested that work be tied to the design phase of the follow on programmes. This will ensure proper integration with the wider palette of planned interventions.

Key National Gender Experts: Nigist Shiferaw and Workwaha Mekonnen

There are several household methodologies in use in Sub-Saharan Africa. All work on gender relations within the ‘black box’ of the household. The goal of household methodologies is to bundle the separate livelihood activities and expenditure responsibilities of women and men (her plot, his plot, *etc*.) into a coherent livelihood strategy for the whole household. This is achieved by encouraging farming households – including children and young women and men- to create a shared vision, analyze their opportunities and constraints, and then work together towards achieving their vision. Critically, household methodologies do not seek to empower one gender (women) at the seeming expense of the other (men). They adopt a ‘power with’ rather than a ‘power to’ approach, and work to promote the understanding that unequal power relations between women and men result in failures to make the best decisions possible, and thus contribute significantly to poverty.

In Ethiopia, ‘Household Gender Analysis for Gender Transformation’ (sometimes called the Gravel Approach) was developed in 2004 by the Sida-Amhara Rural Development Programme (SARDP) and has now been taken up by ORDA and IIRR in the Swedish-funded HARVEST Programme. The actual methodology is simple and uses few resources. It is carried out by village women and men in gender-segregated groups to help diagnose and then share analyses of inequalities across all areas of life. Facilitators then help households to develop household action plans to address these gender inequalities. Community development workers help support the change process over time by bringing households together to share experiences in regular meetings.

A forward-looking assessment of HARVEST (2012)[[1]](#footnote-2) showed that men and women, regardless of ethnic affiliation or religion, were very quick to appreciate the benefits of the methodology. One of the most important benefits cited by respondents was household resilience. Women have learned how to perform ‘male’ tasks, and men now perform ‘female’ tasks. This means that in the absence of either the man or the woman the household can continue to function, whereas before it was very vulnerable. Previously, men did not feel able to cook and feed themselves or children if the wife was away. This caused a lot of tension. If the man died or emigrated for work, women were often reduced to sharecropping land under highly unfavourable terms, resulting in desperate poverty for themselves and their families.

Resource People at NBDC to help implement these recommendations include: Resource People: Kathryn Synder, An Notenbaert, Catherine Pfeiffer, Beth Cullen, Zelalem Lema, Leulseged Yirgu.

Other Resource People: Doug Murray, Amanda Harding, Martha Cronin, Josie Tucker, Tracy Baker.

**Annex 1: Interviews and Discussions with NBDC and Stakeholders**

The interview transcripts reproduced below have been agreed by the interviewee. Interviews are provided in alphabetical order. These interviews provide a wealth of rich analyses and additional ideas on how to address gender. They should be read as a valuable addition to the main report.

NBDC staff interviews were conducted with: Dr. Beth Cullen, Dr. Simon Langan, Ewen Le Borgne, Dr. Zelalem Lema, Dr. Catherine Pfeifer, Dr. Katherine Synder, Dr. Kees Swaans and Dr. Belay Demissie. Dr. Alan Duncan provided a great deal of guidance whilst setting up the consultancy.

Associated and Consultant Staff: Dr. Douglas Merrey, Dr. Amanda Harding.

Limpopo Basin: Dr. Amy Sullivan.

**Dr. Beth Cullen, Social Scientist and Post-Doc. 17th January 2013.**

I am a post-doc with ILRI and joined NBDC/ N2 a year ago. I am an anthropologist by training and have special interests in participatory research methods and applied anthropology. Although I am relatively new to NBDC I have been living and working in rural areas of Ethiopia for the best part of the last seven years. In N2 I have been involved in livelihoods work. This began before I joined the project through a baseline research exercise which aimed to understand the situation in the three study sites, the planning and implementation processes, and particularly how the work in the study sites could be linked into livelihood research. The aim is to understand the impact of certain interventions on the study sites and what is our role in that? How we can improve the way things are done in terms of policy recommendations and improve the impact on livelihoods?

This work is being led by Katherine Snyder with local partners. As part of this work they conducted focus groups divided by gender. Following the baseline research Innovation Platforms were established with the various stakeholders involved in rainwater management.

**Innovation Platforms: Power, Gender, Representation**

The Innovation Platforms had already been established by the time I joined. I had to create my own work in many ways. So I visited each Innovation Platform to understand what was happening. I quickly had concerns about the representativeness of the platforms, in particular about farmer representation. First, it has proven difficult to get equal numbers of women and men on the Innovation Platforms. You need to work through government, and they will select certain people. And, there are simply less women in the government structures.

Second, whilst it was obvious that gender was an issue since the Innovation Platforms are male dominated, it was also clear that those farmers involved, whether male or female, were largely ‘political’ representatives. This is a pretty big issue. To try and deal with this issue of representation, I initiated a series of community engagement exercises. In two sites we had focus groups, participatory mapping, problem identification and ranking, all performed separately by women and men. To ensure our findings were representative we were very specific about the selection criteria for participating farmers. We wanted a representative range of socio-economic backgrounds, etc. so that we could understand which rainwater management issues were important to each sub-group and then the whole community.

This work was a starting point to think about issues around gender, power and representation. But then you have to consider what can be done. You cannot go in and expect to change these things overnight. You need a good relationship with people to start change processes. Our work with participatory methods has largely been about getting these issues on to the table in the first place so that you can actually start talking about them. This is not about tokenistic gestures – having a women officer or a young person’s representative to participate. You need to get to a point where people can talk openly about power, gender, representation - and then get to a point where you can start to change things. This needs excellent facilitation.

We have been trying to get to this point in Fogera through using participatory video. We got community members to say what is important to them. This was very interesting as an exercise but when it comes to discussing the video with Innovation Platform members you are dealing with many issues. There is a blanket idea that farmers lack awareness, that they do ‘wrong things’ because they lack knowledge. There is limited understanding of why they are doing what they are doing. There are real issues around what counts as valid knowledge, and this is also linked to gender. We are talking about issues of power with Innovation Platform members, but we are still just at the beginning of this process. It will take a lot more work to get participation as part of standard practice on the IPs.

In our community engagement exercises we work with women and men separately so they get a space to say what they think, but then you must get to a point where views are shared. Men and women need to reason out the differences and similarities together, to do joint ranking *etc.* We have done this and presented the results back to the Innovation Platform. However, we have found that it was not enough to just present our work. You have to disentangle the issues more effectively if they are to be discussed. We didn’t do that. Even though the people who made the video showed it to the IP members, and had a discussion with them, you need time for follow up. I really wonder if they listened to the messages, even. This said, it should be noted that IP members are very busy. They have a lot to do and have little time. This said, some pilot interventions have started around Fogera which try to address the issues raised.

**Researcher-Community Interactions**

The first site selected for pilot interventions in Fogera failed. There was a lot of resistance by the community. IP members wanted to implement interventions which will eventually require community members to keep their livestock at home, but obtaining fodder has huge implications for daily routines, for labour allocations. These are core gender issues and partly because they weren’t addressed the project had to withdraw. The communal grazing areas were enclosed, the improved fodder was planted – and the community uprooted them a few days later. We sent out an emergency team to find out what is happening and now we are working nearby, with some of the same community members. Through facilitation by NBDC researchers the IP members have taken lessons forward into the new site and made sure to involve farmers from the very beginning.

There is so much talk about gender, about participation, but in practice things are very different. You find people do not know how to do it. They don’t know how to engage properly with people. Even research people can have difficulties approaching communities. The communities have research fatigue, as do our partners. Researchers assume their work is benefiting people but in fact we are often so disconnected from the realities of the everyday life of both woreda officials and farmers. We don’t understand the impact of our interventions on people’s time. There’s a disconnect. For me, the only way this work of ours in the NBDC makes sense is to connect it to something real. Otherwise, how can you make recommendations about what to do? You need to understand what the likely impact of your recommendations will be.

**Interactions between social scientists and biophysical modelers**

Modellers are working in a very different way. They are trying to capture biophysical processes. They look at the catchments, at water flows, they try to understand what effect the planting of different crops will have *etc.* At first glance this does not look as though it is relevant to gender issues, but in fact anything they recommend in terms of strategies will impact upon gender relations, since their recommendations will depend on people actually doing things. When you are talking about adoption you must ground truth your recommendations with real people and real situations.

Across the board I think there is a fundamental misunderstanding of what gender means. People equate the word to women, but actually gender is about the interactions between women and men. What they can do and what they are able to do. Looking at men is part of gender. If you do not understand male-female interactions you are going to have major problems implementing recommendations. Also, there is an assumption that poor women are not powerful. This is really simplistic. Women often have a lot of agency but not in the ways you’d expect. Too often we have Western ideas about what women should be doing and what they want. We should spend more time finding out what women and men actually want.

This said, the work of the NBDC staff has undoubtedly been influenced by personal dynamics, rather than purely disciplinary divides. That is a pity. I see many opportunities of, for example, bringing together participatory modeling work with the work of the biophysical modelers. There is a lot of scope to improve how we work together, but everyone needs to be open to this, to engage and to learn together. With improved openness will come many opportunities. Seminars offer an ideal opportunity for people to present their work, with a discussion space afterwards. This should be easy to do. I find that many people have an interest and openness to learn about things outside their immediate field.

I think that we as social scientists, who have done hands-on work with communities, have not communicated enough with other project components in ways useful to them. The reality is that staff are completely swamped. They don’t have enough time. We need to improve our communication, work together to see where the key links are, and find out how we can best inform each other. We need to make our work more accessible, and so do they. This has started to happen. I have seen very interesting work with agent-based models (from CIRAD) and I am trying this out now. There is a sister project in the Volta Basin, with a team of modelers and social scientists, which I have visited. They are working on participatory modeling with the results being fed into computerized models. In fact, there are many methodologies out there to bridge these gaps. One issue that stops things happening is that some biophysical staff seem to assume that social scientists will not be able to work with biophysicists, that we won’t understand what they are doing. We are discredited before we have even had a chance. This leads into wider issues of ‘what counts’ as scientific work, what counts as knowledge, what counts as research, who counts as a scientist.

**Research for Development**

Ultimately, we are doing research for development. We are increasingly being held to account in the CGIAR system. We want to make sure our research has impact but in fact we are measured in terms of academic performance instead of hands-on fieldwork! As a social scientist I am doing intensive work in the field but I suspect that my work is not necessarily seen as rigorous by other disciplines. I also contend that scientists sometimes lack the ability to frame what they are doing in the development context. We should never forget that what we are doing will influence real people.

In terms of partners in Ethiopia, the NGO legislation restricts rights-based work. Internationally funded NGOs cannot work on gender issues, on disability etc. Local NGOs have more scope, but they can be more easily policed, too.

There is a serious lack of female representation in all forums at all levels. This plays out in the work that we do. We ask why we do not have female masters’ students and are told that they don’t want to study NRM. I don’t believe this is true!

**Recommendations from this Consultancy?**

* Suggestions for how can we incorporate gender more effectively in practical work that we are doing.
* Practical recommendations and methodologies for our applied work.
* Should be easy to implement.
* Highlight why working on gender is so important for the ‘hard sciences’
* Flagging up what gender means – seems obvious but it is not.

**Dr. Simon Langan. Joint Basin leader and Project Leader for Nile 2 on Integrated Rainwater Management Strategies- Technologies, Institutions and Policies Project. 10th January 2013.**

I am senior research officer and head of East Africa and Nile Basin office for IWMI. I started in August 2011. I have a research biophysical background and am interested in how to integrate this with socio-economic management. In my work I am committed to making a difference to the people on the ground.

Let me give you some background on the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPWF). We are now in Phase 2. Phase 2 involves working in six river basins worldwide. Three are in Africa - the Nile, the Volta, and Limpopo in Africa and also the Ganges, Andes and Mekong. Each basin has its own challenge. The common challenge in Africa is improving rainwater management strategies in all basins. All of the CPWF focuses on research for development. There are five component projects to Nile Basin (we focus on the Blue Nile)

* N1 What we know, review was headed by Doug Merrey and now completed.
* N2 Integrated rainwater management strategies was headed by Barrat Sharma who was based in India so I took over.
* N3 Scaling out closed in Dec 2012. An Notenbaert was head.
* N4 Modelling at the basin scale is headed by Charlotte McAlister (although just resigned).
* N5 Communications. Headed by Tilahun Amede/Peter Ballentine. Telehun has now moved to work in Mozambique.

Since the departure of Tilahun in September 2011 Alan Duncan and Ihave taken on the overall Basin leadership.

At the end of this year the Challenge Project on Water and Food will close. The CG system and how it conducts research is fundamentally changing represented by the establishment of CRP’s (Consortium Research Programmes). The CRP on Water Land and Ecosystems (WLE, CRP5) is led by IWMI. Elements of what we are now doing in the NBDC will continue on under WLE. Our role, my role is to tease out with partners what they want to see going forward and what should close. As part of the evolution of WLE process we are appointing a gender person. Katherine Synder has written some of their remit and detailed how WLE will work on gender.

**NBDC and Gender**

We are very conscious of gender issues and indeed of wider cultural issues, although gender, on the whole,is not formally monitored or check-listed. Some activities have a gender component.

In terms of gender balance among NBDC staff and international partners we are pretty good. We have a good mix of female staff, post-docs, senior researchers – but we have very few women students at the masters level and I think absent from PhD level. It seems to me that our Ethiopian partner organizations are male-dominated. It is very rare to meet women in the Ministries and the regional research authorities. This is a hypothesis to be investigated, and if it is verified, it could be good to talk to Ethiopian colleagues one to one about what needs to happen to ensure that more women are employed.

**N2 and Gender**

We have three sentinel sites, which are landscapes of approx. 100 square kms. In each of these we have conducted baseline assessments which have included looking at social structures, livelihood strategies and biophysical, natural resource management structures etc.

In each of these site areas we have innovation platforms – ask Katherine Synder, Beth Cullen, Eva Ludi and Alan Duncan about these. From a biophysical side, within these three landscapes we have established hydro-metreological networks consisting of measurements over space and time in changes in soil and groundwater and stream flows. We have three local catchment coordinators, all of whom are male, but we do have a few local community based female observers in catchments (daily water measurements etc). This is all part of our work on participatory monitoring. I can get figures on the actual male/female percentages if you need them.

The innovation platforms consist of local farmers, their representatives and extension workers. The idea is that they come up with the issues to do with NRM and also the solutions. This process is not driven externally but by them, although currently we are deploying a lot of resources to establish and support them. The idea is that if they see the benefits from working together they will have long-term ownership.

**Irrigated Value Chains and Gender**

We are just starting some work funded by CIDA (LIVES project) and it would be useful if your work could feed into this.

**Contacts for further discussions**

* Birhanu- (post doc) running biophysical monitoring network at 3 sites, [B.Zemadim@cgiar.org](mailto:B.Zemadim@cgiar.org)
* Kindie Getnet (researcher) did work on brokers at sites with students [K, Getnet@cgiar.org](mailto:K,%20Getnet@cgiar.org)
* Masterwal (post-doc on maternity leave) works with Katherine Snyder on governance and institutions.

**Ewen Le Borgne, Knowledge sharing and communication specialist. 16th January 2013.**

I am a knowledge management and communication specialist, and I have also been working on monitoring and evaluation, less so since I joined ILRI in November 2011 but increasingly now. My interest is to ensure that learning is included as part of communication (and monitoring and evaluation). Knowledge management requires system change, it requires behavioural change. In the NBDC we have monthly team meetings, and larger stakeholder meetings about twice a year. These events and meetings help us reflect on what is happening, to build on what has been learned and to integrate the work going on across the NBDC.

This said I have been mostly working on facilitating various meetings and outputs. This final NBDC year I expect I will be assisting project members to publish their work, and to package these according to specific stakeholders that the project is trying to engage with.

One thing I am interested in working more on is process documentation, to consider what is actually happening against the theory of change you are working with. What are the biggest leaps of faith the project is making – which we need to test? Process documentation reveals what is helping or hampering the realization of the expected achievements? This is about informal monitoring throughout the project rather than just at formal reporting moments. Informal continuous monitoring ensures that aspects that would otherwise go unnoticed are captured. It is important to instill an awareness of the learning process throughout the life of the project.

**Specific NBDC work on gender**

The bulk of my work has been around facilitating events. I have been blogging regularly (on the NBDC website) but I do not have a full picture of what is happening in terms of gender. In fact there seems to be very little focus on gender in the vast majority of NBDC’s work. Also, I am personally really sympathetic to gender but have never been trained in gender analysis, or followed an awareness session on gender. I am new to the agricultural sector as well. I may not be aware of key issues that need examining. I don’t know the main gender questions in relation to agriculture specifically though I know the main gender issues in water and sanitation.

Looking across the NBDC, N1 has finished. In N2 there seems to have been the biggest emphasis on gender but this has not been widely reported through articles on the web etc. In N3 I have no idea. I know that in N4 modelling there is no genuine emphasis on gender due to the technical nature of that work - this is a very male-dominated space. However N4 has tried to enroll female MSc/PhD students in their work. In N5 the management has changed. Previously, it was very much an ‘old boys’ network’ and a lot of key decisions depended on the manager who held the network together. It seems to me that female staff found it hard to obtain recognition at that time or to participate to decision-making.

One problem regarding gender analysis is that the NBDC does not work much directly with communities. It is therefore remote from day to day gender issues, from ownership issues, from decision-making at community level and in households. At the national political level the whole arena is very male-dominated. All workshops are populated by a majority of men. We try to allude to the importance of including Ethiopian women, emphasizing the need for their inclusion and we focus on trying to give them chances to participate. Yet this is very difficult. Even if women are present they often seem to lack self-confidence. They find it hard to participate in decision-making. They are usually at a relatively lower level in the hierarchy.

In the NBDC teams there isn’t any active resistance to gender. It is just that men are used to working with each other. They are less inclined to consult women. There is no pro-actively negative climate towards gender issues.

I recently interviewed two gender specialists, Jeminah Njuki and Nancy Johnson. They were saying that if (top management in) institutions do not encourage thinking and discussing around gender issues the institutions and the projects that depend on them will not be able to bring about positive gender-focused outcomes. In my own work, in the facilitation of discussions, I try to find ways to enable women to participate and to speak freely. I try to avoid plenary discussions where only the high-up guys talk and tend to monopolize the discussions.

Another reason for the low level of engagement with gender in the NBDC is that there is such rapid staff turnover. The ones who design and set up programmes (proposals) like these are rarely the ones who implement them. People move on, the many expats that write many project proposals move on. There are long and slow funding pipelines, and by the time the project moves to implementation these instigators have moved on. This raises the chances of gender getting lost between the cracks. It’s part of a broader problem. Institutional memory gets lost. Any learning on previous gender work risks getting lost. Another issue is that in projects, project staff are not 100% on the job. They contribute to various projects and projects should refrain from involving them for less than 20 or 25% of their time, simply because the volume of information generated by projects is enormous. Even in weak knowledge management systems much information is generated and project staff (particularly management) spends a lot of time trying to stay on top of it.

**Dr. Zelalem Lema, Research Officer N2. Working on local innovation platforms. 17th January 2013.**

I joined ILRI in September 2010. Before that I was working on Innovation Platforms through consultancy work for ILRI. Over the past two years we have been identifying stakeholders in the three pilot sites. Various stakeholders are involved in the Innovation Platforms. These include communities which represent various views, government officials, and research centres in the universities. These stakeholders come together to discuss rainwater management strategies. The idea is that they should come up with concrete ideas and then try them out, in a ‘learning by doing’ process. My work involves coordinating each of the three sites, to help them run regular Innovation Platform meetings, and I also backstop research activities.

We are making big efforts to get the partners, including the universities, involved and to send a focal person to be involved in the Innovation Platforms. This is important because when we withdraw we want the stakeholders to continue the Innovation Platforms, with the learning and sharing processes that have already been initiated.

We are working on various initiatives around soil erosion, land degradation and natural resource depletion.

Sometimes it is hard to coordinate with government plans. Right now the government has initiated a large campaign on soil and water management and is calling on communities to work for 55 days to build structures – soil bunds, tree planting, etc. The communities and the government officials at the woreda level are working together. We have to support this initiative, and other similar government initiatives, but it can be difficult since our ways of working differ. Government staff can very busy and may not have time to attend the Innovation Platform meetings. We are trying to organize a process learning approach, and we want to work from the bottom up. However, government initiatives are top down. Governments work right down to woreda level and inform staff of priorities. Each woreda receives information on the intervention and it is set a quota to meet. However, you find that the woreda may have been requested to build stone bunds, but stones may not be available in that location. So, they have to create soil bunds which are at danger of being washed away. To shore them up and protect the soil you will need another complementary intervention. So we have to recommend fodder, multipurpose trees and grasses which can be planted.

As far as the farmers are concerned they have difficulties with the timing of this intervention as we speak. They are trying to manage their own livelihoods and many farmers are harvesting right now. But instead they have to devote 55 days to these activities. The problem is that the activities are scheduled to take place at the same time across the country regardless of agro-ecological zone. In some locations they may have time since they would normally harvest in two to three weeks, but this is not true of all locations.

The issue in Ethiopia is that the communities are often very knowledgeable about their local environments but that this is often not recognized by higher level decision-makers. If you talk to community members they will explain what they have been doing over the past twenty years or so. They can tell you about the changes. Yet, there is often a sense among government staff that community members do not know much, but this is not true. They want to develop according to their own ideas. They may not share the government’s view on the best way forward in terms of natural resource management. In the past these huge campaigns were located only in food insecure areas but now they cover the whole country. Not only are they top-down, they are interpreted at the local level in a very political way. Government representatives at the local level want to demonstrate how they are accomplishing the government’s demands; they get television and press coverage for their efforts. The communities are also expected to host the government staff during the whole 55 days which is expensive for them. All this makes it very hard for us to arrange Innovation Platform meetings as we had planned.

Regarding the Innovation Platforms specifically, we are working on a variety of issues. For example, free grazing is a real problem. As extensive farming extends its range there is less and less land available for livestock. As a consequence soil erosion is increasing. We are trying to introduce improved fodder varieties, and to encourage people to keep livestock in one place. The idea is to plant fodder trees and grasses on the bunds. The IP members have selected a location in the communal area and this is now being implemented. Our work is to backstop what is happening. In another area we are working with private farmers, to help them with fencing, etc. We are also working to train fodder on good feeding practices.

We do not have a strategy to include gender in this project. This said, we realize that gender is very important and we do try to include women in what we do. We do have data on participation and benefits but this data has not yet been analyzed. We will do the analysis this year.

It is not easy to find women to work with at the woreda level. Almost all officials are men, and usually the only women involved are women’s affairs officials. Sometimes you may see just one or two women among 16 to 20 men. At the community level you certainly have more women involved. Female-headed households clearly have different constraints and opportunities to male-headed households. FHH may have difficulties with who will plough for them. Such women need special support to participate equally in decision-making processes. This said, there are social networks in the communities who are trying to help. Our work *per se* helps, because such women spend a huge amount of time sourcing water and fodder for their livestock. If we can locate interventions around their land this will help them save time which they can use for other purposes.

It takes time to set up such Innovation Platform processes. We started with a baseline two years ago. A synthesis of findings was done, then some working papers. It took another year for the Innovation Platforms to come to a consensus, to agree on budgets and workplans, and then actually start the intervention. Each village has different features, different types and numbers of livestock, land etc. There is no one model approach.

We are focusing this year to try to make the innovation platforms sustainable at the woreda level. We want to provide training for the local facilitators. At the national level ILRI has very few people following up what is happening at each of the three sites. We are now in the process of handing over to NGOs. These NGOs are not used to working in participatory ways with the community and engaging in participatory research. Their ways of doing ‘business as usual’ is not what we want. We want them to be practical and involve communities directly in decision-making. I think this provides an opportunity to flag up the need to involve women much more. We will be inviting four people from each of the three sites to be trained at national level. This is a good place to start.

**Dr. Catherine Pfeifer. Post-doc at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Nile Basin Development Challenge project (‘N3’) on ‘**[**Targeting and scaling out of rainwater management systems**](http://nilebdc.org/projects/project3)**‘. 11th January 2013.**

**Team Dynamics**

The NBDC is comprised of a large team of 75 people spread around the world. This can make it hard to work together and build teams. In N3 there are very few full time staff.

One of the main issues with multi-disciplinary teams is that motivation goes down. Our partners get tired of us. We put too many very diverse people together, but they have many other things to do. In my view we need to involve the right people at the right time. At the national level, innovation platforms are not working well. People don’t want to come because they are too diverse. It is much better to bring a few specialists together, e.g. GIS people, together, to work on a specific task.

I think that one big issue is that there are so few senior female Ethiopian scientists. Men reproduce their own structures. They often send only men to courses, for example. It is very hard to officially make a case for women to participate. You would need to establish female participation in staffing and capacity development from the very beginning. It is about finding ways to ensure women have a voice. We need to ask: How do we at NBDC treat women in the team? How do I get treated? I think mentoring programmes are vital whether formal or informal. It is essential to support female national scientists even though their capacity development needs may be high. This may need a formally funded programme. However, all senior (female) scientists can commit to mentoring female national staff.

**Collaboration between Specialists on Gender Issues**

It can be difficult to integrate the work of hardcore modelers and social scientists. Gender is a scaling issue because at a certain stage when you are modeling big patterns gender is not a relevant dynamic. At the continental and the whole country scale rainfall patterns and base flows are important. I agree that at the lower scales, at the farm level, gender is tremendously important but as you go up continent-wise it gets less important. In a model you can only model one or two dynamics. In the work I have been doing on economic household modeling, on which type of household is more likely to adapt a technology, we include the variable FHH or MHH. We found that household status played a key role in access to river water in the community. This said, we have to limit ourselves to climate at higher scales. If you want to include gender you need a multi-scale analysis. You can then provide scenarios. In such work, gender at HH level would feed into the bigger model.

In principle you should be able to go down from the large scale models by taking your results on rainwater and feeding it into a low-scale model capable of addressing gender. Hydrologists and geographers do understand issues of scale. However, we really do not know enough about how make models communicate across scales. There are no best practices to draw upon. To do this work you have to work out which dynamics become more important at a particular scale and how their relative importance shifts across scales. There will always be non-linear relationships, which are difficult to model.

Probably the best you can do is to make ‘loose links ‘(strong links would be mathematically relevant). You would need to focus on a specific location. To be successful you would need a strong tight team working together. In practice, it can be very hard to put anthropologists and hydrologists in the same room because they do not speak the same language or have the same understandings of the issues. For instance, anthropologists can find it difficult to appreciate that gender cannot be used as a variable at the highest levels of scale.

In my work on Happy Strategies, as I said, we obtained statistically significant gender-disaggregated data. The idea of Happy Strategies is to assess which combinations of technologies within a landscape help to optimize ecosystem functioning. A few farmers may lose out, but the goal is to ensure maximum better through better ecosystem functioning. We did the Happy Strategies work with separate women/men teams, but our experience was that women had less knowledge and less interest than men. They were much more interested in their areas of direct responsibility such as home gardens.

**Dr. Katherine Snyder. Senior Social Scientist, IWMI. 11th January 2013**

**Institutional Issues**

Old fashioned views on gender and to gender research still persist in the CG. At the same time, some of us have had unrealistic expectations of what can be done in terms of gender. I find it difficult that we are now getting back to checklists. We have to ask broader questions: Are we working with women in all that we do? How are we working on gender and equity issues? By what means can we do this?

There are always these misconceptions around the term ‘gender’ itself. There is a sense of alienation, a real lack of understanding about what working on gender means. People often fear that working on gender will mean that they will be held accountable to an administrative task or to a checklist. They feel a lack of agency. It is difficult anyway for some people working on biotechnical applications since they have not been trained in gender. There is a real fear what you don’t understand.

Also, some staff can be insensitive to gender differences in the workplace. I think it can be pretty difficult to be a woman sometimes in these institutions. This said, many staff are very supportive and they do want to change how they work and to address gender inequity. But the question is: What can they do? What can we do? Research is research. We talk about research for development but we do not have a mechanism for actually promoting change. We work on getting gender-disaggregated data and women’s voices. But, how do we engage with people after that? How do we work for gender equity? I ask myself: Is the resistance to ‘gender’ in the CG to do with how social science is viewed, to do with ‘gender’ itself, or a combination of the two? I am not sure.

The whole CG is simply not good at handling these discussions. This is partly a symptom of its history. We desperately need a strategy for change, to work more closely with communities, to work more closely with partners. Our work on gender, or lack of it, is a symbol of a wider problem. We have insufficient time to engage with communities in the first place, dealing with nuances is harder, then engaging in transformative ideologies is even harder.

Engaging with NGOs and other change agents needs to be part of what we do. In some countries this is possible, for example in Tanzania it is quite easy to find gender NGOs to work with. With such organizations you can ask: We can feed you our results - What information do you need to improve the situation you are working in? Here in Ethiopia it is a little more difficult. Innovation platforms are about encouraging bottom up planning, which is challenging in this country, and then trying to insert gender into that is difficult.

**Working on Gender in the NBDC**

Part of the problem is that everyone feels overworked in the project. People say: What do you want me to do with this checklist? For some of us gender is a given, yet in our work, for example the innovation platforms, asking partners to consider gender issues is very difficult. The whole idea is to give district leadership ownership over the programme and so you cannot ‘force’ them to consider gender. This is compounded by the fact that almost no women work in the district offices. How can you change staffing and get women to sit on innovation platforms?

Beth Cullen has been working on participatory video to get women to speak and to enable people to hear their voices. This is important work because the actual innovation platforms are entirely, or almost entirely (need to check) male. The government is often responsible for selecting members. Some are model farmers, who in themselves may be political appointments. Our dilemma is that we have to work through government but there are almost no women to work with in government structures. The National Innovation Platform is male-dominated too. There are really very few women. Yes, it would be good to push for more women at all levels of government, but this is not our project agenda.

We have been working with communities on the ‘Wat-A-Game’. This is about getting a community to look at resource management issues across the landscape and the issues involved. This is played with farmers, experts *etc.* separately. Then you put everyone together. You so often find that the so-called experts are really taken aback at what the communities actually know. We need to trust local people more.

**Mentoring**

Could we make a conditionality of our work that we mentor women students? I am not sure we could. We don’t have a single woman in our internship programme in Ethiopia (though we did have an American woman as an intern from Amory Uni). We work through the universities and ask them to select the best students for us. It would take a lot of time and effort – which none of us have – to talk to deans and other staff to explain why we want to support women scientists. We don’t have the time and the CG systems does not provide any incentives for us to do so.

**Outputs to this Consultancy**

Suggest ways to insert a more engaged approach to gender at a variety of levels. Provide some examples of how approaches to these issues in communities. Give examples to try out, to get people to think differently or do it differently. Make the argument for it.

Gender Training for Staff.

**Dr. Kees Swaans. Scientist. Innovation in Livestock Systems N5**

**Dr. Belay Demissie. National Consultant. Linking science with national policy.**

**16th January 2013.**

*Kees*: Initially I was involved in N2, N4, and N5 but now I am mainly involved in N5 which is the coordination and change project of the NBDC. N5 is about improving coordination and integration of the different projects, communication, fostering change and innovation, and monitoring & evaluation. I am responsible for the fostering change and innovation component. We have set up a National Platform with different partners from the NBDC but also wider stakeholders in the water and land sector. There are many players involved in the platform including donors, NGOs, ministries, and the NBDC, of course. The National Platform has a steering committee. The big issue here is that there are many institutional challenges. There are so many actors yet so little sharing and learning from each other. It has been a real challenge just to set up the National Platform and it was a real accomplishment to achieve this. In our last year we want to improve the links between the NBDC and National Platform and improve policy links.

We stared working at the national level and local level with (innovation) Platforms, and the idea as to develop regional platforms at a later stage in the project, but it will not be possibly to further work on this in the remaining time frame of the project. Still regional issues play a big role in land and water management and we are thinking of how to have more influence at this level in our last year.

The NBDC basin leader and previous project leader of N5, Tilahun Amede, has left. He had a good overview of the key people, players, and networks in land and water management in Ethiopia, as well as the policy making process. When he left we had a real gap, which is why we hired Belay as a national consultant.

*Belay*: I am new to ILRI as a national consultant. Right now I am reviewing documents and working on synthesizing out key questions for the final year. What are our key research recommendations for national and regional level? How can we link our scientific work to policy? How can we get lessons learned embedded more into policy making processes at regional and national levels?

**Specific Work on Gender**

*Kees*: I am the project leader of a Research into Use program (funded by CPWF) which is linking termite control, water, livestock and crops. Gender is not an explicit focus of this project although we recognize that there is a very clear division of roles between women and men in terms of land use and decision making. The use of crop residues is important to land rehabilitation strategies and we know that some residues are important to women as a source of fuel for cooking. We want to embed this project more strongly with the work already conducted as part of the Innovation Platform in Diga, one of the research sites. This could be an opportunity to explore how to use integrated termite management strategies and technologies and better understand their impact on women’s workloads, feeding such data into practice immediately.

We did not have gender baselines for this project. We did not separate out women and men in our focus group discussions. For us, gender was important, but not the main issue. We considered the budget available and the information we needed: land use practices; relationships between termites, land use, and water; what people already know and do to mitigate the impact of termites; and mapping the institutional structures which deal with land degradation and termite control. Gender roles and decision making in relation to soil, land and termite management were, however, also explored, and will followed up when evaluating integrated termite practices in terms of gender implications.

**Working on Gender in the NBDC in 2013**

Kees: If we are to talk about gender at the policy level, we must have good evidence to make our case. Without evidence we simply cannot make recommendations. This year we are going to have two National Platform meetings. The first one is going to be about lessons learned so far in the NBDC. Right now I cannot see that we have much to present on gender, but it is worth exploring what has been done, and it may be especially relevant to look at the lessons learned and resulting recommendations, what the gender implications would be, using a “gender” lens. This may lead to specific recommendations related to gender.

It may also be an idea to have a Learning Event on gender. We have 6 to 8 Learning Events annually e.g. on modeling, participatory methods, community engagement etc. At the learning events, under the heading of the national platform on land and water management, tools, projects, issues, can be presented and discussed among organizations with a specific interest in the topic. Such learning events are supposed to lead to outputs such as a Learning Brief. We could organize a Learning Event around gender and water, bringing different actors together, share lessons learned and develop a learning/policy brief.

**Gender and Institutional Issues**

Kees: Within the steering committee of the national platform on land and water management gender did come up as an important issue to pay attention to, but in NBDC as a whole gender does not seem to come up much, except maybe at the local level.

Before working at ILRI, I have worked on HIV and Food Security in South Africa. I am aware of the key gender issues and type of questions that are important. However, in my view we need to think through our work on gender very carefully. If gender is a key focus, there are many implications for project design. Gender can be considered an issue of power, but there may also other power relations which are important, such as relationships within and between households, between generations, between people from different socio-economic position, and at different levels. If you are interested in being pro-active, adopting gender transformative approaches – which means working on norms, values, regulation, then you have to really think about what this means for your work and the people involved. The implications are huge and can potentially put people at risk. I don’t think you can achieve gender transformation in 2 to 3 years. If you have projects with a longer life time of about 5-10 year, yes.

Belay: In all research and development we say ‘gender should be mainstreamed’. We say this should be institutional policy. We say gender should be translated into action during design and then during the actual research and when the findings are implemented. We have to find out the extent to which gender has in fact been mainstreamed in NBDC research agenda. You need to think about the actual gender balance of the staff involved, too. How many staff are women / men? What is the gender balance of participants in workshops and capacity building trainings? You have to have this thinking right at the beginning of a project. For us in the NBDC it is too late.

Kees: We can explore a few things. For example, we need practical ideas of how to link local level and higher level work, e.g. related to modeling. How can we take gender into account? Nancy Johnson at ILRI was responsible for the livelihoods work in N4 – which was mainly modeling – but not sure to what extent that has been integrated in the work. Maybe you can contact her.

We also need to explore and understand how gender plays a role in policy processes. Are any decision-makers receptive to gender? What processes can be instituted to make these institutions more receptive?

*Belay:* In rural Ethiopia women take the lead role. They support the husband and take care of the kitchen and garden. They take products to market. Women manage the whole system, really, and they are overburdened. Cultural and religious issues contribute to their burden. The government has been instituting measures to support women, for example women are members of land administration committees at kebele level. Women are getting involved in the resource management of area closures. They are targeted by micro-finance institutions including village saving and lending associations (VSLA). So, there are many attempts to ensure women benefit directly from such activities.

At the national and regional level there is a women’s development strategy. There are attempts to mainstream gender in the Ministry of Agriculture and national research system. There are gender experts at the higher level and in the agricultural extension system. However, none of this actually influences what is happening at the grassroots level. There is a failure to translate the aims into practice, from policy to implementation. There are no gender experts at woreda or kebele level. You have good female health extension workers at kebele level but no agricultural staff with gender expertise, and in fact very few women experts per se.

**Expectations of this consultancy**

Kees: It would be good to draw up the lessons learned, our experiences, so that they can be taken on board now or for future projects.

Belay: It is important to speak not only of the successes but also the failures. What happens if you do not work on gender?

Kees: Based on the discussions, where do you see opportunities, gaps, entry points? How can we follow up? Maybe the focus should be less on what we have not done but rather on what we can do in the time remaining. Can we provide gender awareness training in agricultural extension systems? What does a gender lens actually mean in practice? What can gender do? What approaches can we use? Who should our partners be for work on gender? How do you translate work on gender to the field with specific reference to rainwater management practices? This discussion cannot stay abstract.

How can we link to work on gender to work on policy? How can we make sure gender is included in policy making at the national and the regional levels?

Gender-disaggregated data is important for scientific articles but what does it mean to move beyond this? What are the design and resource implications of working on gender? Is gender always so important, or are other power related issues which are more or equally important? In what situations should it be a key issue for design, and in what cases could be taken into account. To what extent should gender be integrated, by topic, objective, time frame? Where and when? When should we just apply a ‘gender lens’, and looking at implications and how to address those, and when should e go further and work on ‘gender transformation’?

**Interviewees Associated with the NBDC**

**Dr. Amanda Harding. CPWF management team member. 10th January 2013.**

I am a part time member of the CPWF management team and spend half my time on the Challenge Program. Currently I am the MT lead for NBDC. Part of my role is to support CPWF as a whole on policy and strategy issues; to bring rights-based debates into planning and implementation and to help ensure CPWF, including the NBDC, contributes to well-defined relevant development outcomes. I am concerned with looking at the research process itself. It is not just about the results, but the process. How are the outcomes arrived at?

**Gender and NBDC**

To try and get people to think about their work on gender I ask questions like: Are you actually thinking about men and women and their roles? About what the research means to them? The way in which you are going to do the research?

In the NBDC staff say that they are working on gender, but very little of this is documented. We need to know what the work on gender looks like and what it means if we are to replicate it and go to scale.

We want to put forward ‘gender stories’ which show that gender equity is not just a guiding principle. We want to demonstrate working on gender makes a difference to how research is carried out as well as the research itself. We want to ask: What does this mean in practice and how does a gender perspective really contribute to improving development outcomes?

Beth Cullen’s work (N2) on participatory approaches in local innovation platforms is very interesting. She is making more explicit reference to gender, and she has been examining how / if the different dynamics between women and men make a difference to outcomes. Katherine Synder, a gender expert, is also working on N2. Overall considerations of gender in N3 and N4 are extremely weak. This is partly because these are very much about modeling, but also because there is resistance within those teams to working on gender.

We produced a gender checklist for the NBDC. The idea was to use the checklist as a way to kick-start a discussion process within the various teams. We hoped that talking through the questions would get people to open their eyes and think about things in a different way. It was meant to taken fairly lightly but unfortunately developed into a heavy and exhaustive tool so it was never used.

The discussion on checklists leads into a broader discussion on how to bring about change in people’s ideas and practices. In the NBDC creating space to have this discussion has per se been very difficult. There have been some difficulties within the teams about working together, let alone creating a space for discussions on gender. Also, in my view many staff lack the confidence to discuss their ideas on gender. We need to try and get a handle on this. We should not be too intellectual and academic.

**Gender and CG**

One problem with the whole CG system is that gender and diversity within the team and within the research process itself are seen as two different topics. This is very clear in the CGIAR Gender Strategy. Yet they are intrinsically interrelated. Regarding the NBDC in particular, there are a few white female scientists on the team but very few Ethiopian women, particularly at the higher levels. Being a social scientist in IMWI is very difficult and being Ethiopian is more difficult.

Gender and cultural diversity is key. We need to embrace transformative change in the CG. We need to ask researchers to come to terms with who they are individually, as teams, as groups, and to consider the changes they need to go through. Currently, CG change processes are very challenging. There is the expectation that people should change but they are not being accompanied in this process. There are so many targets being set. You are expected to meet them. It is all very linear, very rigid. The CG operates according to rewards, sanctions, publications. We need to think about how to bring about real change. We have to find ways of bringing change through research into development outcomes and processes. The rewards for the CG could be huge. Of course, this goes beyond gender checklists – we need an array of strategies.

The new WLE project is, unfortunately, not moving well. It is not really addressing gender.

A reason that the CPWF put gender and diversity into its principles (see website) is that we at senior level came to realize that a number of senior women were leaving CPWF. This was very worrying. We realized that that women were leaving due to the way the CPWF operates. For many senior men this came as a shock because they really believe they are gender-aware. We have now put forward a gender initiative to reinforce the gender perspective across the programme. This initiative has been validated by the CPWF Board and MT. It does not demand any extra capacity but aims to demonstrate a step change across the CPWF R4D.

**Outputs from this consultancy**

I think we need tools, ideas and quick wins, as well as proposals for how to work on gender in the longer time frame. 2013 has to be about learning. We have to really communicate the research the NBDC has been doing on gender. Isn’t this a great opportunity! If NBDC maintains there is a lot of implicit work on gender then let us make it explicit and learn from it.

Also, try to get reactions and comments from a wider group of stakeholders.

**Dr. Douglas Merrey. Consultant to the NBDC project. 15th January 2013.**

My direct involvement with NBDC has not been large. I conducted a retroactive study (2010) which was based on a literature review rather than fieldwork. This said, I have visited Ethiopia frequently. As the first Director for Africa at IWMI I set up the Africa office in Addis. I was also involved in setting up the Challenge Program on Water and Food from the beginning, and more recently I have been working as a consultant to help the new NBDC leaders, Simon Langan and Alan Duncan, in their work.

As far as I can see most work on gender in the NBDC is being conducted in N2. However, very little has been written up. I think the main problem is that gender *per se* is not a key issue at the highest levels in the CG or within the CPWF either. The higher level people in the NBDC are often modelers or natural scientists, and even though there are some high level women, they are not more sensitive to gender issues than their male colleagues as a rule. There is a really serious institutional issue, in that these institutions (i.e., CGIAR, IWMI, NBDC, all governments) are male creations, and dominated by male perspectives. Even the new CRP 5, Water, Land and Ecosystems, program does not address gender as a central issue. There is a minor paragraph here and there but gender is not mainstreamed.

I spent 20 years at IWMI. In my experience, people hired to push forward the gender agenda were not very successful. There are real institutional barriers. IWMI has always been managed almost entirely by men. No DG has seriously supported work on gender. Staff can do so much else to be recognized and get rewarded – there are no incentives for working on gender. Gender seems too tough, as well, to many people. I have worked a lot with NEPAD, which has gender specialists and refers to gender issues in its official documents, yet to do anything serious requires huge changes in mindsets and incentives. You have to recruit completely different people. You need proper gender training programmes. People have to clearly understand the benefits to them to work on gender. Work on gender must be conducted at the design stage.

Also, I think that there is an issue with partners. In Ethiopia for example, it seems to me that most Ethiopian women are placed very low in the hierarchy. They are rarely key decision-makers. Staff members in our partner organizations are not rewarded for work on gender. Wider development partners like IFAD do not appear to take gender seriously, either, except rhetorically. Even if you can demonstrate that some small-scale work you have done on gender has been very successful to a funder it is rare for them to take it seriously and fund replication and scaling up. The example is evaluations of past small-scale irrigation projects in Ethiopia consistently show huge benefits from the small investments aimed at women—household garden water supply etc.—but this is always a tiny peripheral component and not a central investment.

**Dr. Amy Sullivan. CPWF Basin Leader in the Limpopo. 11th January 2013.**

There was never a budget associated with gender in the CPWF and no-one at the programme level was specifically made responsible. Responsibility at BDC level was eventually given to the Coordination and Change projects, but without specific budgetary or technical support or backstopping.

The guys in charge simply did not know what they needed to know, so they did not ask for help. If they ask they didn’t get it. At the programme level they dropped the ball. To work on gender—to build the proper platform from which to do it well—you need the right people at the right place at the right time. A number of people in leadership, management, and coordination positions—at programme and basin levels—did not have even the basics of gender. .

It is partly our fault. As gender experts we have set ourselves apart, too mysterious to others, others simply do not understand what gender is about. Yet gender lives in all of us. It is very different to talking about resilience or some other technical issue. Gender happens to us. It changes the game. Now we know that working on gender is about intersectionality. It is about race, class, gender. It is about power structures. Powerful people need to understand their privileged position and address it. I think it is offensive for people who do not want to make organizational structures more empowering to then send out masters’ students to the field to try and get it right there. It is very tiring to work on gender. There are meetings about trying to address gender at all levels and then budgets are cut, or there is no money to do it to start with. There are not enough higher level staff with the expertise, either.

At the project level you can start with the ‘simple stuff’. My interest is in working with research scientists to make sure that they get it right (or better) next time. They need training in how to make sense of what they have collected and to make stories from this. They often do not know how to interpret the data. You often need to go one step back in order to analyze and interpret data properly. Our experience in the Limpopo is that we have been dealing with gender in very different ways in different projects. If you are working on infrastructure you will be interested in who is using those infrastructures and so you need to look at the questions you are asking and who you are talking to. If you are working with secondary data, you may find that it is not be sex-disaggregated. How can you augment this data then? You can go to the field and ask women and men farmers about these technologies. You can try to understand differences in the way in which women and men approach technologies.

In South Africa there is a general awareness that working on gender is the right thing to do. But in practice it is pretty difficult to do. We have learned that we do not have an accurate picture of who is farming. We know that farming is very different to what it was in the past. Yet policy makers do not have accurate information on who is actually doing the farming and who we think is doing the farming.

In terms of your research, we originally wanted a very basic gender audit. We wanted someone to go through the project documentation to see if and how gender was included. If not, where should gender have been included, and why? We need some grounds for cross-basin comparisons. We need to know the range of situations that we are dealing with across the six basins, where and why they are different, and what can we learn from the similarities and differences.

**Gender Lunch Participants. 22nd February 2013.**

Martha Cronin, CGIAR.

Getenesh Bekele, MOA NRM Directorate.

Yenenesh Abebe, IWMI.

Zelalem Lema, ILRI.

Douglas Merrey, Consultant.

Leulsegard Yirgu, RiPPLE.

Josie Tucker, ODI.

Tracy Baker, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science at Richard Stockton College.

Amanda Harding, CPWF.

1. Farnworth, C.R. and Shiferaw, N. (2012). Forward Looking Assessment of HARVEST Gender-Responsive Livelihood Diversifications for Vulnerable People. Prepared for SIDA-Ethiopia Team. July 2012.. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)